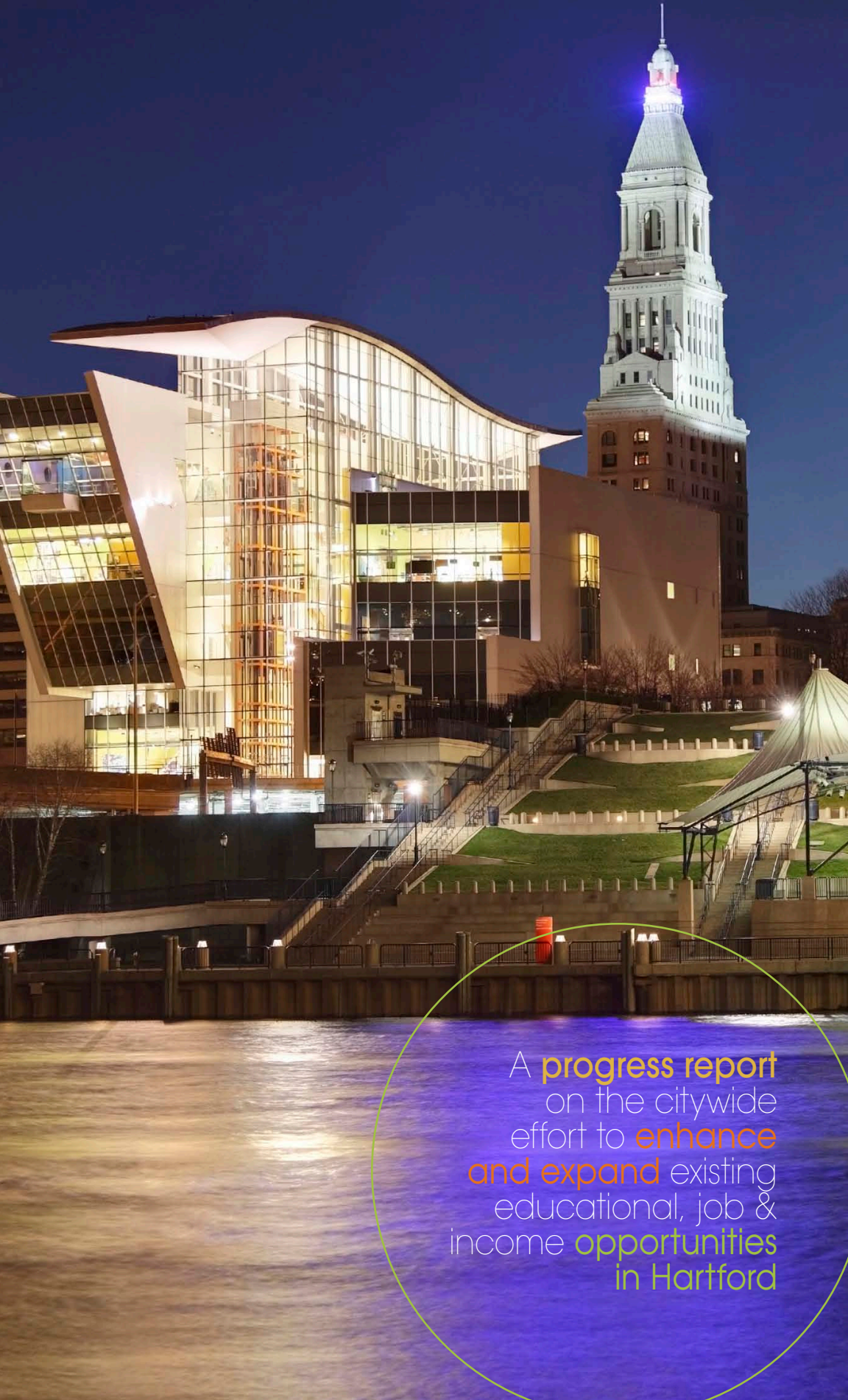


# OPPORTUNITIES HARTFORD



A progress report  
on the citywide  
effort to enhance  
and expand existing  
educational, job &  
income opportunities  
in Hartford





COMM

# What Opportunities Hartford will make happen.

Hartford provides many opportunities for the people who live, learn, work, play, and worship here. However, many of these opportunities that are designed to lift the income and education of residents and improve their prospects for better jobs are limited in scope and scale and not coordinated. On their own, many promising opportunities are not backed by sufficient resources and capabilities to make a community-wide impact.

To address this situation, Mayor Segarra and his administration has launched Opportunities Hartford with three initial goals in mind:

- ① Identify the greatest opportunities that now exist in Hartford to improve community-wide results in the areas of education, job readiness/job creation/career advancement and family-sustaining income for our residents.
- ② Convene and coordinate the efforts of individuals and groups who together possess the skills, abilities, knowledge, and resources to enhance and expand existing opportunities.
- ③ Funnel public and private sector funds when and if available to invest in the targeted areas of opportunity.

With resources tight, too many citizens living below the poverty level and the economy only slowly recovering, it is critical for the City's leadership to set strategic priorities for improving educational results, creating jobs and increasing the median income of our residents.

# ITMMENT

# LE V S N O P S E R

Listening to where the people of Hartford see opportunities.

Mayor Segarra created an Opportunities Work Group in December 2010 to manage the development of **Opportunities Hartford**, and to build on the work started in 2009 by the previous administration's Poverty Task Force. The Opportunities Work Group began its task of identifying the best and most promising educational, job and income growth opportunities that now exist in Hartford by surveying a wide range of people, including: Hartford residents (a sampling of youth, adults and parents) and representatives of non-profit organizations, philanthropies, local and state government; schools and education-oriented groups; small businesses, labor and corporations. Several local and state leaders were also interviewed in person. Both the survey and the interviews were designed to elicit ideas about the best educational, jobs and income opportunities that now exist in Hartford, how they can be improved and what new opportunities can realistically be created.

Three general themes emerged from the responses of more than 100 research participants:

1

“Of all the projects undertaken in Hartford, the move of Capital Community College has had the greatest impact on downtown...Businesses like a viable market.”

Downtown Hartford needs to continue its transformation from primarily a business locale to a 24/7 multi-dimensional center connected to people in the neighborhoods—with opportunities for shopping, entertainment, learning, cultural enrichment, and housing. The downtown move of Capital Community College was cited by many as a positive step.

2

“The Hartford Public Library works with immigrants & the unemployed to prepare them for opportunities and become more effective parents.”

Improving educational outcomes in the City was widely recognized as both a critical need and opportunity. The Hartford Public Library is seen as a model for success in terms of its accessibility and emphasis on family education: ELL, financial literacy, and early child care and education.

3

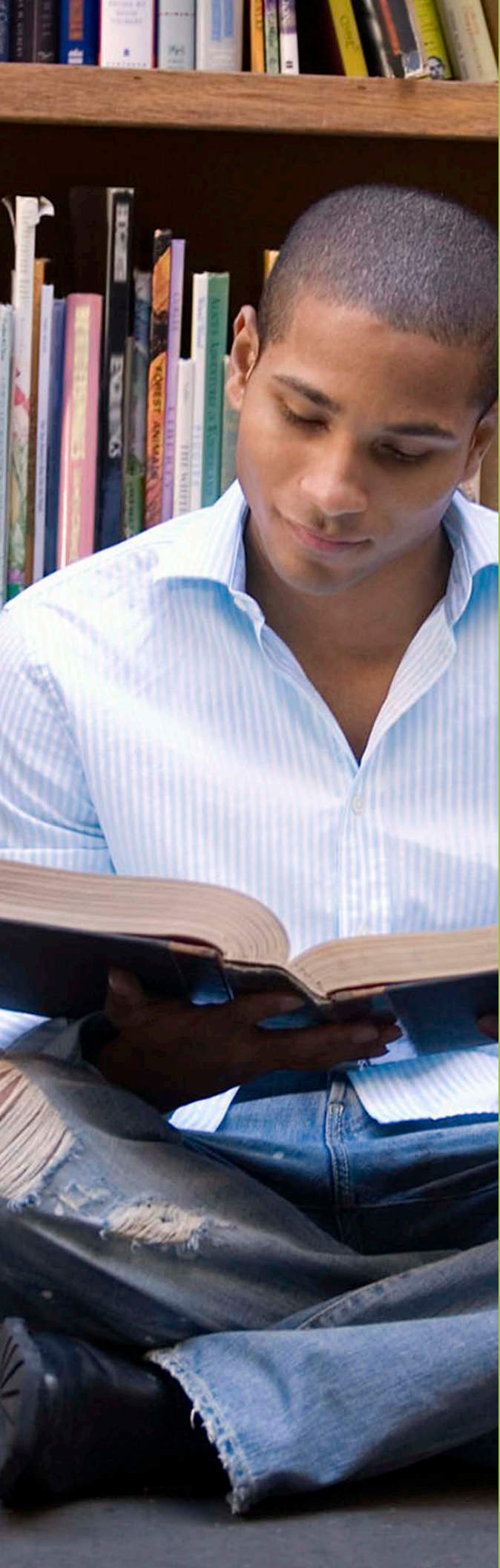
“What’s working well are the reforms that have taken place in the past three to four years to better coordinate youth services.”

Partnerships and collaborations that create efficiencies among agencies and funders are considered essential to the ongoing success in the effective delivery of support services in Hartford.

Beyond the e-mail, phone and in-person interviews, the Opportunities Work Group’s research identified successful opportunities in Hartford that could be nurtured and expanded. The Opportunities Work Group also learned and adopted some compelling principles for guiding the work of **Opportunities Hartford**. The following principles are borrowed from the Center for Law and Social Policy.

- Build on successes/turnarounds and ongoing initiatives; focus on what’s achievable.
- Focus on measuring real family stability (e.g., median family income).
- Engage the small business and corporate sectors for expertise, funding, and jobs.
- Engage the grassroots to ensure popular support and continuity beyond a single elected official.
- Use a leader to set the tone and ensure effective execution of action steps.





COMMUNITY

# Examples of promising practices in Hartford.

## In the education area, opportunities exist in:

**Early childhood learning.** Strengthen family centers by adding job training, adult education, financial literacy, homeownership programs, and by continuing current successes in advancing the professional development of early care and education providers.

**K-12.** Sustain and build on the positive trends in outcome areas such as 3rd and 8th grade test results and on-time high school graduation. Programs designed to keep youth in school, such as Opportunity High, should be replicated on a broader scale.

**Post-secondary.** Develop broader high school-college connections such as the emerging program at Eastern Connecticut State University. More adult education and remedial/developmental education offerings can meet a big need in our community.

## In the job area, opportunities exist by:

**Building upon the sector-based jobs funnel program** managed by Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) in cooperation with the building trades. This construction effort can be bolstered by downtown housing construction, school construction, and I-84 reconstruction. Other sector-based opportunities that have been piloted and which can be pursued are allied health and advanced manufacturing.

**Supporting the Metropolitan District Corporation (MDC) jobs program** for the sewer-separation project.

**Working with the business community to retain employees and attract new ones.** Good examples include The Hartford's Asylum Hill initiative, Common Ground's Swift Factory Plan, the Bridges Program (a partnership of Local 1199, Capitol Region Education Council, CWP and Capital Community College) and the incumbent worker training programs of CWP and others.

## In the income area, opportunities exist to:

**Enhance access to benefits.** This includes programs and services such as the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance/Earned Income Tax Credit (VITA/EITC) program of the Hartford Asset Building Collaborative led by Co-opportunity, the potential state EITC, Earned Benefits Online/2-1-1 Navigator/ABC benefits calculator, and the Connecticut Department of Social Services moving to on-line applications.

**Integrate effective asset building programs** such as Co-opportunity's Budget Coaching Program and the Financial Resource Center for low-income families, Community Renewal Team's Family Service Centers, the Cities for Financial Empowerment Coalition, Connecticut Money School, and the Sustainable Communities project.

# Closing the quality of life gap between Hartford and our more affluent neighbors.

In the current economic climate, we must invest in opportunities that will make for a stronger City with more prosperous residents. In order to become stronger, we need to find new and better ways to close the gaps between Hartford and the state as a whole in the following key quality of life indicators:

	CT	Hartford
3rd grade reading proficiency (2010)	72%	46%
8th grade reading proficiency (2010)	83%	60%
On-time high school graduation (2007)	82%	40%
Unemployment (2009)	8%	14%
Median household income (2009)	\$67,034	\$28,300
% of persons below poverty level (2009)	9%	32%

One in three Hartford residents is under the age of 18. This makes Hartford a very young city in a state that is rapidly aging. Statewide businesses have choices when they look to fill jobs. They can seek candidates locally, bring in talent from other states, or move to places where there is a pool of qualified workers. We all win when we equip our local young people with the skills and knowledge to compete effectively in an increasingly global environment.

The ultimate payoff of **Opportunities Hartford** must be to narrow the most glaring educational, job and income gaps that separate our city from the rest of our state. We can do this. The City, through strong executive leadership and grassroots buy-in and support from all sectors, can align and coordinate the most promising efforts that now exist here while also adapting promising practices from other cities. In doing so, it is critical for us to hold each other accountable through an ongoing and active evaluation component that measures how much we improve the well-being of Hartford's residents and increase their share of the prosperity experienced by most of the rest of our state.



# POTENTIAL





# IN

## Next steps.

This progress report addresses the first of the three goals Mayor Segarra articulated for **Opportunities Hartford**. The task of the Opportunities Work Group was to scan the landscape in the City by listening to its residents and other important stakeholders, by identifying promising practices in Hartford and other communities, and by recommending a framework for action to Mayor Segarra.

In meeting this first goal of the **Opportunities Hartford** work, members of the Mayor's staff benefited greatly from the contributions made by Trudi Lebron of Family Life Education, a Hartford-based social services agency, and by the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS), a Hartford-based statewide organization whose mission is to end poverty in the state. Special thanks go to Jim Horan, Executive Director, and members of the CAHS staff, Sarah Chasse & Sheryl Horowitz, for their time, expertise and resourcefulness in gathering, analyzing and drawing conclusions from multiple sources of information.



# CLUSIVE

The City is now prepared to convene and coordinate the efforts of those individuals and organizations that together possess the skills, abilities, knowledge, and resources to enhance and expand educational, job and income opportunities in Hartford. Mayor Segarra plans to soon convene a community-wide forum with local leaders who represent the City's businesses, educators, and neighborhood residents. At the forum, sector-specific planning committees will be formed to closely examine and refine the promising opportunities identified in the first phase of **Opportunities Hartford**. Recommendations from these committees will then be incorporated into an Opportunities Resource Guide and introduced to the community early in the fourth quarter of 2011.





OPPORTUNITIES HARTFORD  
COMMITMENT  
RESPONSIVE  
CONTINUITY  
POTENTIAL  
INCLUSIVE



**PEDRO E. SEGARRA**  
MAYOR